



At this event last year, our then President Anna Judson spoke about the challenges around access to veterinary medicines as a result of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Thanks to the hard work of the BVA Northern Ireland Branch, alongside our past President, Malcolm Morley, we managed to secure a three-year grace period, enabling medicines to be accessed under the old agreement. This extension however, is coming to an end and will cease by the close of 2025, unless a new arrangement with the EU is reached. Failing to find a solution risks both animal and human health, not only in Northern Ireland but in the Republic of Ireland, and ultimately across Europe.

The new UK Government's manifesto commitment to reach a veterinary agreement with the EU provides us with a new opportunity to secure access to veterinary medicines. The Government wants closer relations with the EU and so we'll be increasing our lobbying, to ensure ministers and officials not only understand the scale of the issue, but prioritise it so supply of Northern Ireland veterinary medicines is at the forefront of any agreement. We would welcome any support you can give us to help progress this work.

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The Competition and Markets Authority investigation has been a huge challenge for those in clinical veterinary practice over the last year – and BVA has been proud to stand up for our profession and ensure that the veterinary voice is heard. Although this is limited to household pets, the outcomes of the CMA investigation are likely to impact upon the potential sustainability of all veterinary practices, especially small, mixed and rural practices such as some of those in Northern Ireland.

Following the CMA's initial review which began in September last year, and the subsequent confirmation that it intended to proceed with a formal market investigation, we have been continuously working to ensure that our members have access to the most up-to-date information and advice. We have also been actively challenging negative and often very unfair coverage of the profession in the media.

We have worked constructively with the CMA throughout the investigation process, to ensure that they fully understand the veterinary landscape and to help avoid any unintended consequences, including those for animal welfare.

We remain committed to working closely with the CMA to ensure that its investigation leads to positive outcomes, while supporting the profession with measures such as our [new guidance to help address concerns on transparency and client choice](#). We continue

Finally, I would also like to pay tribute to a very valued colleague, Des Thompson, who as you know sadly passed away recently. He was extremely well known to all of us in the profession having served as RCVS President, and we acknowledge his tireless work as an advocate for the profession, particularly in Northern Ireland.

I would also like to say a huge thank you to the BVA Northern Ireland Branch Officer team for their incredible commitment and passion in representing the veterinary profession and driving forward some of the issues I have talked about this evening. Sharon, Esther, Kirsten and Mark you are all a huge asset to BVA and valued colleagues to me and to the BVA team. Thank you very much. I would also like to extend my appreciation for all his work in NI to Simon Doherty, past President of BVA, who unfortunately can't be with us this evening as he is unwell. I am sure you all join me in wishing him a speedy recovery.